

# 100 young inmates tapped to aid Salt River cleanup

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About 100 inmates will be let out of the Arizona State Prison at Florence next month and bused to central Phoenix.

But they're not expected to pose any threat.

They'll arrive May 10 and 17 to pick trash out of the Salt River in the Valley.

The trash, which was washed downstream by January's floods, will be removed by inmates in the prison system's shock-incarceration program, a boot-camp-style training program for young, first-time, non-dangerous offenders.

The thrust of the program, limited to those age 18-25, is to provide young felons with a taste of prison and a heavy dose of discipline in the hopes they will understand what they're up against if they continue a life of crime.

Because of an intense exercise regime in boot camp, these felons are in prime shape to remove tires and other heavy debris from the riverbanks before an expected 25,000 Valley volunteers conduct a cleanup May 22, said Mike Arra, a spokesman for the Department of Corrections.

## Old tires a priority

"I'm really excited about the inmate volunteers," said Rick Elder, who is heading Gov. Fife Symington's Great Salt River Cleanup.

Debris and garbage on the banks of the Salt include an estimated 20,000 old tires that have washed up or were dumped in a relatively confined area along the river between Seventh Avenue and 24th Street, Elder said.

The concentrated location will enable about 25 guards — one for every four inmates — to easily keep track of the felons, Arra said.

The inmates, who technically are probationers who will remain in the shock-incarceration program for 120 days before they are given "supervised release," will not be paid and will not receive any time off their scheduled boot-camp service by participating in the cleanup, Arra said.

The cleanup will be just another assignment, Arra said, similar to the manual labor the boot-camp crews perform for Pinal County and the town of Florence.

As will volunteers who sign up for the May 22 cleanup, the inmates will get instruction on avoiding hazardous

and medical wastes and will be provided gloves, tools and plenty of refreshments, Elder and Arra said.

## Volunteer deadline nears

Medical personnel and hazardous-waste experts will accompany them, they said.

Meanwhile, Elder said, time is running out to volunteer for the May 22 cleanup. No additional volunteers will be accepted after May 8 in order to provide plenty of time for training and planning logistics for the cleanup area, which stretches 39 miles, from Mesa to Avondale.

Volunteers may call 207-7777.

Elder said 13,855 people have volunteered in addition to about 500 others from various Valley corporations and an expected 12,000 Boy Scouts.

In addition, local corporations have donated more than \$63,500 to help meet the cleanup's costs.

In Tempe, 344 tons of debris have been removed by paid city crews from 7.3 miles of riverbanks.

In addition, nearly 13 tons of trash were removed Saturday by volunteers working along the Salt River north-east of Mesa.